

Corn—Missouri's All American Crop

Corn is the most important grain in the United States. Corn is also important in Missouri. Missouri ranks ninth among the 50 states in the amount of corn produced.

There are several different kinds of corn. The three kinds most common in Missouri are dent corn, popcorn, and sweet corn. We all enjoy popcorn. Sweet corn is the kind that you might grow in your garden for corn on the cob. However, most of the corn that you see growing in large fields throughout Missouri is dent corn.

Corn has a very interesting history. Corn probably originated in Central or South America and it is actually a member of the grass family. The Aztec, Mayas and Incas of Central America and Mexico were known to grow corn. By the time Christopher Columbus discovered America, he found the Native Americans growing corn and he took a few seeds back to Spain with him. When colonists came to America to start living here, they learned how to grow corn, prepare corn, and the Native Americans even showed them how to fertilize it.

The corn plant is one of the tallest crops that is grown in our state. However, the early corn was not very big. In the early 1900's plant breeders started developing new kinds of dent corn called hybrids. Hybrid corn grew taller, had larger ears, and more kernels than the old dent corn. One of the people who helped develop these new hybrids was Henry Wallace, George Washington Carver's young friend.

Dent corn is the main grain that is used to feed livestock. Some dent corn is also made into silage. Silage is made by chopping up corn while the plant is still green and then storing it in a big silo on the farm. The moist silage can then be fed to animals during the winter.

Much dent corn is also milled into starch that is used to make many foods and industrial items. Large amounts of corn are used to produce corn

sweeteners that are widely used in soft drinks and candies such as jelly beans. Corn oil can be removed or extracted from the grain. It is used for cooking and is found in products such as soap. Dent corn is used to make some of our favorite food items - corn flakes, corn chips, and tortillas.

Another important corn product is ethanol. Ethanol is produced when corn grain is fermented to produce alcohol. Ethanol is a natural fuel that is added to gasoline. It is more environmentally friendly and is used to reduce air pollution.

Visit The Missouri Corn Growers Association web site at <http://www.mocorn.org/education.htm> for information on available resources and current projects.

The National Corn Growers Association also has a fun web site where you can learn more about corn. You might like to visit this site at: <http://www.ncga.com/education/main/index.html>



Corn Farm Facts

Here is a table from Missouri Farm Facts that tells about Missouri's corn production. Look at the table and then answer the questions below it.

Acreage, Yield, Production and Value, Missouri, 1996-2000

Crop Year	All Corn			Harvested for Grain		
	Planted	Harvested	Abandoned ^{1/}	Acres	Yield	Production
		-thous. acres-		-thousands-	-bushels-	-thous.
1996	2,650	2,610	40	2,540	134.0	340,360
1997	2,700	2,680	20	2,600	115.0	299,000
1998	2,650	2,580	70	2,500	114.0	285,000
1999	2,650	2,620	30	2,550	97.0	247,350
2000	2,850	2,830	20	2,770	143.0	396,110

Crop Year	Value of Corn for Grain ^{2/}		Harvested for Silage		
	Per Bushel ^{3/}	Total	Acres	Yield	Production
	-dollars-	-thous. dol.-	-thousands-	-tons-	-thous. tons-
1996	2.77	942,797	70	15.0	1,050
1997	2.45	732,550	80	14.0	1,120
1998	1.92	547,200	80	12.5	1,000
1999	1.96	484,806	70	9.5	665
2000	1.75	693,193	60	15.0	900

1. How many thousand acres of corn were planted in Missouri in 2000? _____
2. How many thousand acres of corn were harvested in Missouri in 2000? _____
3. Why do you suppose some corn was abandoned (not harvested)? _____

Keep these facts in mind as you answer Questions 4 – 7.

A) An acre of land is about as big as a football field. B) A bushel of corn weighs 56 pounds.

4. What was the yield per acre in 2000? _____
5. Why do you think the yield per acre of corn varies from one year to another? _____
6. What was the value of corn per bushel in 2000? _____
7. Why do you think the corn price varies from one year to another? _____